

1938

ANNUAL REPORT.

Fiscal year of 1938

Printed by
Linspipe, Pablo, Willow Creek
and Benton Lake
Refugee

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~~man, Mont.~~

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17 Sept 1937

Use Birds of Refuge, by Birde. In the on set of discussion relative to wildlife on the various refuges it should be stated it has not been possible for the refuge manager to give as much of his personal time relative to observations concerning this matter as he wished. However it is felt that some interesting information is available to present here. In addition I should add that I attempted to use UPA assistance in checking birds and so forth but found that very little of the information received could be depended upon. Of course with some exception.

On August 27, on Willow Creek there were about 4,700 ducks including 1,700 red head ducks. The others were mainly gadwalls and mallards but the baldpates, shovellers, green and blue winged teal, lesser suncups, golden eyes were included as well as 50 ruddy ducks, 20 buffle heads, about 400 pintails, 50 Wilson phalaropes, 200 gulls, about 100 pelicans. One Chinese pheasant was also seen besides three hungarian partridges, two prairie falcons, two western desert sparrow hawks, one cooper's hawk, one burrowing owl, 40 Baird and least sandpipers, 250 American coots, 75 horned and eared grebes, as well as 15 western grebes, and one common loon.

August 28, on Pishman the following birds were seen: 5 marsh hawks, 1 American rough-legged hawk, 3 western red tailed hawks, 5 raven, 1 curlew, 425 red heads, 55 buffle heads, 40 mallards, 30 ruddy ducks, 75 common loons, 35 American mergansers, 15 red breasted mergansers, 100 horned and eared grebes, 2 greater yellow legs, 25 blue winged teal, 40 pintails, 400 American coots, 100 baldpates, 300 gulls, 35 spotted sandpipers, 150 phalaropes, 30 Baird sandpipers, as well as 600 which could not be identified because of poor field glasses and their distance from shore.

On October 17, on Willow Creek there were more than 17,500 migratory waterfowl, which included 1,000 baldpates, 27 buffle heads, 1,000 red heads, 500 pintails, 3,000 gadwalls, and an unusual concentration of 8,000 mallards about 200 ruddy ducks and 2,000 American coots, while on October 30 on Willow Creek there were still about 13,000 migratory waterfowl present, but on November 4 there were only about 30 ducks sitting on the ice, as the reservoir had frozen over.

On Pishman on October 17, there were about 6,000 ducks, and 5,000 on October 30. On November 20, 1,700 golden eyes and 200 American coots were present. I might add here that Pishman had frozen over at the same time Willow Creek had, but due to its larger body of water it was open again on November 20, but all ducks outside of the golden eyes and coots apparently had gone.

It was estimated that the 1937 fall migration on Pablo and Ninepipe was reduced at least 50 per cent in comparison with the fall of 1936. On October 28, 1937 there were about 12,500 ducks and 500 geese on Pablo and 14,000 ducks and 500 geese on Ninepipe. Movements of birds during migration are naturally going to vary from a report of the day to another, and for that fact that a check in the afternoon. Thus my figures not always agree with those taken by the UPA team.

Ducks started to freeze over about the middle of December while because of the fact that they were running water into Hinespyre it did not start to freeze until December 8, at which date there were about 10,000 ducks sitting along the edges which were still open. On December 9, there were still about 10,000 ducks on the refuge. The greater share of them left soon after that. Although on December 9 most of Pinto was frozen solid there were at least 400 geese on the refuge. Although Hinespyre and Pablo were frozen solid throughout the winter ducks frequented the areas at intervals. For instance, on January 4 there were about 5,000 ducks on Hinespyre and on January 9 there were 2,000 ducks and 600 geese on Pinto. This is accounted for due to the fact that between 10,000 and 40,000 ducks and 500 to 600 geese wintered in Flathead Valley.

I understand from the natives near Pintuck and Willow Creek that they saw no ducks on Pintuck or Willow Creek during the period that the refuges were frozen solid.

I missed the main spring migration on Pintuck and Willow Creek, but Mrs. Redden, a rancher who borders Pintuck and has a keen interest in birds, said that literally thousands of snow geese went through, but she couldn't give me the dates.

As far as Hinespyre and Pablo are concerned the spring migration for snow geese reason was also 30 to 40 per cent lower than that of the spring of 1937. This was true for geese as well as ducks. However, the nesting species have increased in number on both refuges.

On April 14, 1938 Denton Lake was visited and it was found that the outlet in the north west portion of the refuge had water in it flowing a distance of about 6 miles in length and about 30 feet in width. The following migrants were seen: 100 green winged teal, 100 pintails, 50 mallards, 20 blue winged teal, 2 ruddy ducks, 62 killdeer, and 3 curlews. On June 1, Denton Lake was again visited. There were some small potholes in the creek bottom in the north west portion of the refuge still containing water. Seven pairs of pintails, 6 of mallards, 1 of green winged teal, including a total of 77 young duck, were counted. In addition the following birds were seen: 1 pair of baldpates, 1 male godwit, 6 pairs of yellow plover, 2 pairs of sandpipers, 22 sandpiper lares, 5 curlew sand, 18 killdeers, as well as cliff swallows, barn swallows, western wryneck sparrow, long eared, and desert lark sparrow. Of course most of these birds were confined to the north west portion of the refuge where water was available.

On June 20, after heavy rains, Denton Lake had an additional supply of water. It was extremely muddy and this did not make it possible to accurately identify the birds using the refuge on that day, but there were more than 1,000, and 20 ruddy ducks could be seen very near the road. It was impossible to take the net on the rest of the refuge.

On April 16 on Pribilof the following birds were counted: 200 gulls, 50 American mergansers, 10 ruddy ducks, 100 blue winged teal, 50 green winged teal, 400 mallards, and about 400 pintails and baldpates, as well as 75 golden eyes. While on April 16 on Willow Creek there birds were seen: 300 red head ducks, 150 lesser sapsucker, 10 buffle heads, 75 pintails, 150 baldpates, 200 greenwings, 4 pelicans, 250 gulls, 3 greater yellowlegs, 2 curlews, 100 mallards, 75 golden eyes, 100 canvas backs, 25 blue winged teal, 25 green winged teal, 50 American mergansers, as well as 8 pintails grounds, and 2 Hungarian partridge. Just on April 27 the birds were checked on Pribilof and Willow Creek. Among those seen on Willow Creek were 300 red head ducks, 150 canvas backs, 50 ruddy ducks, and 50 buffle heads, as well as 14 swallows, 8 curlews, 200 baldpates, and 300 greenwings. On Pribilof the rare species were: 3 buffle heads, 50 canvas backs, and 50 red head ducks.

An interesting fact that should be pointed out concerning the birds on Willow Creek during this spring and particularly the latter part of May and June is that pintails and mallards pulled in by the water in large numbers. As many as 6,000 were estimated by former Game. The attraction was the rising water brought about by the spring runoff. It seems that the mallards, and particularly pintails greatly enjoy swimming and feeding on freshly flooded areas due to the eye there is apparently very little food.

There were about 2,000 ducks on the coast of including Pribilof on June 16. As time goes on and the amount is posted and properly patrolled its numbers probably will without doubt be utilized to a much greater extent by any migratory material.

During the spring of 1950 the WPA employee I have been training on bird identification reported the following dates as the first day the birds included in the table were seen on Ningaloo and Pribilof. He recognized the species listed in the table and I believe the information can be depended upon.

<u>Species</u>	<u>Date of Arrival</u>	<u>Number</u>
Shore Lark	March 17	100
White-tailed Tropicbird	March 17	100
Blue-faced Booby	March 21	100
Lesser Sapsucker	March 21	100
Pintail	March 22	100
Golden Eye	March 24	100
Gull	March 24	100
Buffle Head	March 25	100
Curlew	March 25	100
Greater Yellowleg	March 25	100
Red-necked Phalarope	March 25	100
Blue Winged Teal	March 26	100
Greenwing Teal	April 4, 1950	100

It is felt that the refuge manager has something very much of interest to offer concerning the two major species using Ningaloo and Pribilof. His letter and Canadian geese. A record has been kept of their use of the two refuges from August 15, 1957 to June 15, 1958.

in the same areas in both towns. Information on the migrants are only about 22 miles apart the information brought forth is quite interesting. Compare the spring migration of geese at Peckville with that on Winnipeg. It may indicate the effect that the Little plant-geese spike must be relative to the appearance of geese. The graphs point out the number of geese entering or leaving the refuge in Peckville. From this on their numbers changed very little until March rolled around. The graph further points out the habit the geese have in coming in and going off the refuge at different intervals usually bags in Redwood Valley. They also give the reader an opportunity to compare fall migration records with spring migration records, as far as numbers are concerned.

The comparative graphs relative to milled corn on Winnipeg and Peckville give a difference in amount in spite of the distance of the refuge as well as readily point out that Winnipeg seemed to be the most attractive refuge to the migrants. The reader also may know the numbers using the refuge by glancing over the graph which accounts for the fact that they were not listed in a separate discussion.

Comparative graphs for the spring migration of various birds, sandhill, red winged, and snow geese, are also included. Please note that the dates listed on these graphs are those that can be readily recognized in the field and because of that the refuge manager feels that although information was supplied by RVI technician, it is quite accurate, as whenever the refuge manager dictated their reports in the field he called to their attention that the listing of their jobs depended upon the honesty and accuracy of their reports. This little experiment where movement was measured for a particular species on a comparative basis on two refuges, as close as Winnipeg and Peckville, pointed out to the refuge manager that general movement at a general time of the year is comparative. It will be difficult to judge movements on one refuge by the movement on another, and that statement applies to the movement habits of birds and rather dangerous.

I believe it would be interesting to mention that while working on the nesting study on June 24, the refuge manager made an attempt to make an actual count of the red ducks, geese, and sandhill birds using Winnipeg for a nesting base. Only 10 red ducks were counted, 100 red geese, and 10 sandhill birds. There were at least that many, but it is almost certain that in the previous pictures and colors may well be mixed.

In closing the discussion of birds I should add that nesting activities have not been discussed for the reason that our nesting study is not complete. We still have work in the field which hasn't begun. As soon as all our data is complete from the field and we are able to compile it, a comprehensive nesting report as well as interesting life history information on different species, and so forth, will be submitted for your approval.

Animals. There has been very little change in animals using the areas, with the exception that since grazing has not been permitted for the past two summers on Barton Lake, it is interesting to note the increase of western white-tailed jack rabbits on that refuge. However, there are still very few of them and in their present numbers they would be considered an animal which should be protected on the refuge.

On April 14 on Barton Lake 5 antelope were seen. They had to be making themselves very much at home and just exerted themselves enough to move from the path of the car.

Again this year a white-tailed deer was seen on Pablo refuge by MNR employees.

The main animals using all of the refuges would still be listed as: skunk, coyote, minkrat, jack rabbit, cotton-tail, pocket gopher, Columbian ground squirrel, marmot, badger, weasels, and numerous mice which, as yet, have not been collected and identified. It should be added here that cotton-tails have been increasing on Pablo, at least to the point where one can be seen now and then; while on the whole, cotton-tail rabbits are very scarce in Flathead Valley. This is also true of the western white-tailed jack rabbit. If Pablo Refuge, now that it is properly protected, will increase their numbers to a certain extent, it will be extending a decided benefit to the sportman in this locality.

Use of Refuges by Man. Picnickers and campers used Mokim extensively after July 1, 1937 up until cold weather set in in the fall. It would be impossible for us to accurately estimate the man days of recreational use. However, judging from information I was able to obtain from the CCC supervisor, and Mr. Bowers of the reclamation service, about 800 man days of recreational use would be a fair estimate for Mokim, about 300 for Willow Creek, 300 for Pinripo, and about 50 for Pablo.

Floating Islands. More than 200 nests of various migrants were found on the newly constructed floating islands on Pinripo this year. Although the four floating nesting rafts were not launched until late, one golden eye nest was found on one of them and costs have started to climb up on them. However, it has been observed that ducks will have to become used to their presence before they make any extensive use of them, as they haven't used the rafts to speak of.

Water Conditions. There has been an over-supply of water for Mokim this year, as illustrated by Figure 1.

Willow Creek reservoir raised considerably this year and the fine potholes found on that refuge were replenished with water because of heavy rains and run-offs. Figure 2 illustrates one of those potholes.



FIGURE 2



FIGURE 3

On April 14 the coulee in the northwest portion of the Benton Lake Refuge had water in it for a distance of about five miles and a width of about 20 foot. On June 9 this coulee was practically dry, with the exception of small puddles in its deeper portions. One of these potholes is illustrated by Figure 3. (Notice the duck) On June 30, just after unusually heavy rains had struck the Benton Lake area, it was found that the refuge had been supplied with a new supply of water. The lake bed itself had some water as shown by Figure 4 which was taken from quite a distance.



Figure 3

Figure 4

Figure 6 shows an entirely new pothole which has been formed on the east portion of Benton Lake refuge. I have been anxious to get back over there when the area could be carefully checked from dry land. At that time I may discover more water there and submit another report.



Figure 6

The reclamation service has had more water this year for Ninepipe and Pablo than they have had for several years because of unusually heavy run-offs. Figure 6 points out this supply of water on Pablo. We built several dikes on Pablo which were described in last year's report. These dikes were constructed in the couloes particularly on the south of the Refuge. We had a heavy snow on that refuge last winter which melted rapidly and thus supplied us with an excellent supply of water behind these dikes. The ducks have been making excellent use of them.

Figure 6